

STAT

30 March 1959


MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT: Program of National Intelligence Estimates
1 April - 30 September**

1. This is the regular quarterly exercise. USIB action should be completed at tomorrow's meeting to permit publication of the approved program at the beginning of the Second Quarter.

2. We expect the Program to be approved by the other USIB members as it stands. Army had earlier proposed that an estimate be done on Communism and related problems in Africa as a whole, but the Army representative appeared to be satisfied by our argument that the problem could be more effectively dealt with in the context of the West African estimate now in preparation and the proposed estimate (Item No. 15) on Central and East Africa.

3. We do, however, have one additional proposal to put forward, namely, that an SNIE on Laos be scheduled


for mid-May. This recommendation, which is strongly supported by the Far East Division, DD/P, is based on the following considerations:

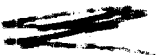
a. Our last estimate on Laos, NIE 68-57, was a short-range paper published in August 1957 and is now out of date.

b. A number of recent developments warrant close scrutiny:

(1) The Phoui government, which was recently granted sweeping powers by the National Assembly, remains preoccupied with political maneuvering and has failed to initiate a countrywide program which would undercut Communist proselytizing and organizing activities in the countryside.

(2) There has been a rapid rise in the political power of the reformist CDNI which, in cooperation with the army, is challenging the control of Phoui and the other old-line conservative politicians.

(3) The US is currently at odds with France over plans for improving the training of the Lao Army, which is reportedly deteriorating rapidly in effectiveness.



(4) Laos is being subjected to stepped up pressures
from North Vietnam and Communist China.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates